

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ATLANTA DIVISION**

KIVON SCOTT, individually and on behalf of all
others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

AMERICOR FUNDING, LLC d/b/a
AMERICOR FINANCIAL,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION

Case No.

COMPLAINT – CLASS ACTION

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

1. Plaintiff Kivon Scott brings this action against Defendant Americor Funding, LLC d/b/a Americor Financial, to secure redress for violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”), 47 U.S.C. § 227.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

2. This is a putative class action under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. § 227 et seq., (“TCPA”), arising from Defendant’s knowing and willfully violations.

3. To gain an advantage over its competitors and increase its revenue, Defendant engages in unsolicited telemarketing, with no regard for consumers’ privacy rights.

4. This case arises from Defendant’s transmission of prerecorded messages to the cellular telephones of Plaintiff and others, promoting Defendant’s services and goods.

5. Defendant a financial services company that sells various debt consolidation, debt settlement, credit counseling, and bankruptcy related products and services to consumers. To

promote its services, Defendant engages in unsolicited marketing, harming thousands of consumers in the process.

6. Consumers on the internet have expressed frustration with Defendant's robocalls.

The following is just two examples from Defendant's profile on BBB.org:

-Received numerous spam calls throughout the day and, after blocking their number I started receiving voice-mail with the same automated messages.

-Your company continues to call and harass me even after I have asked each and every time to be taken off the call list. I want you to stop calling me or I will be contacting an attorney.¹

7. Through this action, Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief to halt Defendant's illegal conduct which has resulted in the invasion of privacy, harassment, aggravation, and disruption of the daily life of thousands of individuals. Plaintiff also seeks statutory damages on behalf of himself and members of the class, and any other available legal or equitable remedies.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

8. Jurisdiction is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 as Plaintiff alleges violations of a federal statute. Jurisdiction is also proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2) because Plaintiff alleges a national class, which will result in at least one class member belonging to a different state than that of Defendant. Plaintiff seeks up to \$1,500.00 (one-thousand-five-hundred dollars) in damages for each call in violation of the TCPA, which, when aggregated among a proposed class numbering in the tens of thousands, or more, exceeds the \$5,000,000.00 (five-million dollars) threshold for federal court jurisdiction under the Class Action Fairness Act ("CAFA"). Therefore, both the elements of diversity jurisdiction and CAFA jurisdiction are present.

¹ <https://www.bbb.org/us/ca/irvine/profile/financial-services/amerikor-1126-100093457/complaints> (last accessed June 1, 2023).

9. Venue is proper in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c) because Defendant is deemed to reside in any judicial district in which it is subject to the court's personal jurisdiction, and because Defendant provides and markets its services within this district thereby establishing sufficient contacts to subject it to personal jurisdiction. Further, Defendant's tortious conduct against Plaintiff occurred within the State of Georgia and, on information and belief, Defendant has sent the same prerecorded messages complained of by Plaintiff to other individuals within this judicial district, such that some of Defendant's acts in making such calls have occurred within this district, subjecting Defendant to jurisdiction in the State of Georgia.

PARTIES

10. Plaintiff is a natural person who, at all times relevant to this action, was a resident of and domiciled in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

11. Defendant is a Delaware LLC whose principal office is located at 18200 Von Karman Ave., Suite 600, Irvine, California 92612. Defendant directs, markets, and provides its business activities throughout the State of Georgia.

THE TCPA

12. The TCPA prohibits: (1) any person from calling a cellular telephone number; (2) using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice; (3) without the recipient's prior express consent. 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A).

13. The TCPA exists to prevent communications like the ones described within this Complaint. "Voluminous consumer complaints about abuses of telephone technology—for example, computerized calls dispatched to private homes—prompted Congress to pass the TCPA." *Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC*, 132 S. Ct. 740, 744 (2012).

14. In an action under the TCPA, a plaintiff must only show that the defendant “called a number assigned to a cellular telephone service using an automatic dialing system or prerecorded voice.” *Breslow v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.*, 857 F. Supp. 2d 1316, 1319 (S.D. Fla. 2012), *aff’d*, 755 F.3d 1265 (11th Cir. 2014).

15. The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) is empowered to issue rules and regulations implementing the TCPA. According to the FCC’s findings, calls in violation of the TCPA are prohibited because, as Congress found, automated or prerecorded telephone calls are a greater nuisance and invasion of privacy than live solicitation calls, and such calls can be costly and inconvenient. The FCC also recognized that wireless customers are charged for incoming calls whether they pay in advance or after the minutes are used. *Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, CG Docket No. 02-278, Report and Order, 18 FCC Rcd 14014 (2003).

16. In 2012, the FCC issued an order tightening the restrictions for automated telemarketing calls, requiring “prior express written consent” for such calls to wireless numbers. *See In the Matter of Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, 27 F.C.C.R. 1830, 1838 ¶ 20 (Feb. 15, 2012) (emphasis supplied).

17. To obtain express written consent for telemarketing calls, a defendant must establish that it secured the plaintiff’s signature in a form that gives the plaintiff a “‘clear and conspicuous disclosure’ of the consequences of providing the requested consent....and having received this information, agrees unambiguously to receive such calls at a telephone number the [plaintiff] designates.” *In re Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, 27 F.C.C.R. 1830, 1837 ¶ 18, 1838 ¶ 20, 1844 ¶ 33, 1857 ¶ 66, 1858 ¶ 71 (F.C.C. Feb. 15, 2012).

18. The TCPA regulations promulgated by the FCC define “telemarketing” as “the initiation of a telephone call or message for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods, or services.” 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(12). In determining whether a communication constitutes telemarketing, a court must evaluate the ultimate purpose of the communication. *See Golan v. Veritas Entm’t, LLC*, 788 F.3d 814, 820 (8th Cir. 2015).

19. “Neither the TCPA nor its implementing regulations ‘require an explicit mention of a good, product, or service’ where the implication of an improper purpose is ‘clear from the context.’” *Id.* (citing *Chesbro v. Best Buy Stores, L.P.*, 705 F.3d 913, 918 (9th Cir. 2012)).

20. “‘Telemarketing’ occurs when the context of a call indicates that it was initiated and transmitted to a person for the purpose of promoting property, goods, or services.” *Golan*, 788 F.3d at 820 (citing 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(a)(2)(iii); 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(12); *In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, 18 F.C.C. Rcd at 14098 ¶ 141, 2003 WL 21517853, at *49).

21. The FCC has explained that calls motivated in part by the intent to sell property, goods, or services are considered telemarketing under the TCPA. *See In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, 18 FCC Rcd. 14014, ¶¶ 139-142 (2003). This is true whether call recipients are encouraged to purchase, rent, or invest in property, goods, or services during the call *or in the future*. *Id.*

22. In other words, offers “that are part of an overall marketing campaign to sell property, goods, or services constitute” telemarketing under the TCPA. *See In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, 18 FCC Rcd. 14014, ¶ 136 (2003).

23. If a call is not deemed telemarketing, a defendant must nevertheless demonstrate that it obtained the plaintiff's prior express consent. *See In the Matter of Rules and Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, 30 FCC Rcd. 7961, 7991-92 (2015) (requiring express consent "for non-telemarketing and non-advertising calls").

24. As held by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit: "Unsolicited telemarketing phone calls or text messages, by their nature, invade the privacy and disturb the solitude of their recipients. A plaintiff alleging a violation under the TCPA 'need not allege any *additional* harm beyond the one Congress has identified.'" *Van Patten v. Vertical Fitness Grp.*, No. 14-55980, 2017 U.S. App. LEXIS 1591, at *12 (9th Cir. May 4, 2016) (quoting *Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins*, 136 S. Ct. 1540, 1549 (2016) (emphasis original)).

FACTS

25. On or about March 6, 2023 and March 13, 2023, Defendant began causing calls with a prerecorded message to be transmitted to Plaintiff's cellular telephone number ending in 3428 (the "3428 Number"). Plaintiff estimates that he received at least three calls.

26. Because Plaintiff did not answer his telephone after it rang, a voicemail containing a prerecorded message was left on Plaintiff's phone each time.

27. The following is a transcript of a voicemail that was left in Plaintiff's voicemail box:

Hello, this is Amy from Americor. We're offering a free, no obligation consultation related to your inquiry. We're passionate helping you achieve financial freedom. Please call us back.

28. Defendant caused multiple voicemails with the exact or substantially identical message to be transmitted to Plaintiff's cellular phone.

29. The prerecorded calls at issue, which were left as voicemails, were transmitted to Plaintiff's cellular telephone, and within the time frame relevant to this action.

30. When Plaintiff listened to the voicemails he was easily able to determine that it was a prerecorded message. *Rahn v. Bank of Am.*, No. 1:15-CV-4485-ODE-JSA, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 186171, at *10-11 (N.D. Ga. June 23, 2016) ("When one receives a call, it is a clear-cut fact, easily discernible to any lay person, whether or not the recipient is speaking to a live human being, or is instead being subjected to a prerecorded message.").

31. Defendant's prerecorded calls constitute telemarketing because they encourage the future purchase or investment in property, goods, and/or services, i.e., requesting that Plaintiff contact Defendant regarding Defendant's products and services.

32. The prerecorded calls Plaintiff received originated from telephone number 949-670-5259, a telephone number owned and/or operated by or on behalf of Defendant.

33. Plaintiff received the subject calls with a prerecorded voice within this judicial district and, therefore, Defendant's violation of the TCPA occurred within this district. Upon information and belief, Defendant caused other prerecorded messages to be sent to individuals residing within this judicial district.

34. At no point in time did Plaintiff provide Defendant with his express consent to be contacted with a prerecorded call.

35. Plaintiff is the subscriber and sole user of the 3428 Number and is financially responsible for phone service to the 3428 Number.

36. Defendant's unsolicited prerecorded call caused Plaintiff actual harm, including invasion of his privacy, aggravation, annoyance, intrusion on seclusion, trespass, and conversion. Defendant's prerecorded call also inconvenienced Plaintiff and caused disruption to his work-day

as he received the prerecorded messages while at work. *See Patriotic Veterans, Inc. v. Zoeller*, No. 16- 2059, 2017 WL 25482, at *2 (7th Cir. Jan. 3, 2017) (“Every call uses some of the phone owner's time and mental energy, both of which are precious.”).

37. Defendant’s unsolicited voice messages caused Plaintiff actual harm. Specifically, Plaintiff estimates that he has wasted five minutes reviewing all of Defendant’s unwanted messages.

38. Furthermore, Defendant’s voice messages took up memory on Plaintiff’s cellular phone. The cumulative effect of unsolicited voice messages like Defendant’s poses a real risk of ultimately rendering the phone unusable for voice messaging purposes as a result of the phone’s memory being taken up.

39. Defendant’s voice messages also can slow cell phone performance by taking up space on the recipient phone’s memory.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

PROPOSED CLASS

40. Plaintiff brings this case as a class action pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated.

41. Plaintiff brings this case on behalf of a Class defined as follows:

All persons in the United States who, within four years prior to the filing of this action through the date of class certification, were sent a prerecorded voice call on their cellular telephone regarding or related to Defendant’s property, goods, and/or services.

42. Defendant and its employees or agents are excluded from the Class. Plaintiff does not know the number of members in the Class, but believes the Class members number in the several thousands, if not more.

NUMEROSITY

43. Upon information and belief, Defendant has placed automated and/or prerecorded calls to cellular telephone numbers belonging to thousands of consumers throughout the United States without their prior express consent. The members of the Class, therefore, are believed to be so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.

44. The exact number and identities of the Class members are unknown at this time and can only be ascertained through discovery. Identification of the Class members is a matter capable of ministerial determination from Defendant's call records.

COMMON QUESTIONS OF LAW AND FACT

45. There are numerous questions of law and fact common to the Class which predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. Among the questions of law and fact common to the Class are:

- (1) Whether Defendant made non-emergency prerecorded telemarketing calls to Plaintiff's and Class members' cellular telephones;
- (2) Whether Defendant can meet its burden of showing that it obtained prior express written consent to make such calls;
- (3) Whether Defendant's conduct was knowing and willful;
- (4) Whether Defendant is liable for damages, and the amount of such damages; and
- (5) Whether Defendant should be enjoined from such conduct in the future.

46. The common questions in this case are capable of having common answers. If Plaintiff's claim that Defendant routinely transmits prerecorded messages to telephone numbers assigned to cellular telephone services is accurate, Plaintiff and the Class members will have identical claims capable of being efficiently adjudicated and administered in this case.

TYPICALITY

47. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members, as they are all based on the same factual and legal theories.

ADEQUACY

48. Plaintiff is a representative who will fully and adequately assert and protect the interests of the Class, and has retained competent counsel. Accordingly, Plaintiff is an adequate representative and will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class.

49. In addition, Plaintiff has retained counsel with substantial experience in prosecuting complex litigation and class actions, including those involving violations of the TCPA. Plaintiff and his counsel are committed to vigorously prosecuting this action on behalf of the other respective members of the Class and have the financial resources to do so. Neither Plaintiff nor his counsel have any interests adverse to those of the other members of the Class.

PROCEEDING VIA CLASS ACTION IS SUPERIOR AND ADVISABLE

50. A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this lawsuit, because individual litigation of the claims of all members of the Class is economically unfeasible and procedurally impracticable. While the aggregate damages sustained by the Class are in the millions of dollars, the individual damages incurred by each member of the Class resulting from Defendant's wrongful conduct are too small to warrant the expense of individual lawsuits. The likelihood of individual Class members prosecuting their own separate claims is remote, and, even if every member of the Class could afford individual litigation, the court system would be unduly burdened by individual litigation of such cases.

51. The prosecution of separate actions by members of the Class would create a risk of establishing inconsistent rulings and/or incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant. For example, one court might enjoin Defendant from performing the challenged acts, whereas another may not.

Additionally, individual actions may be dispositive of the interests of the Class, although certain class members are not parties to such actions.

COUNT I
Violations of the TCPA
(On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Class)

52. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

53. It is a violation of the TCPA to make “any call (other than a call made for emergency purposes or made with the prior express consent of the called party) using any automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice ... to any telephone number assigned to a ... cellular telephone service” 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii).

54. Defendant – or third parties directed by Defendant – transmitted calls using an artificial or prerecorded voice to the cellular telephone numbers of Plaintiff and members of the putative class.

55. These calls were made without regard to whether Defendant had first obtained express permission from the called party to make such calls. In fact, Defendant did not have prior express consent to call the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class when its calls were made.

56. Defendant has, therefore, violated § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) of the TCPA by using an artificial or prerecorded voice to make non-emergency telephone calls to the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class without their prior express consent.

57. Defendant knew that it did not have prior express consent to make these calls, and knew or should have known that it was using an artificial or prerecorded voice. The violations were therefore willful or knowing.

58. As a result of Defendant's conduct and pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA, Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class were harmed and are each entitled to a minimum of \$500.00 in damages for each violation. Plaintiff and the class are also entitled to an injunction against future calls. *Id.*

59. Because Defendant knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class had not given prior express consent to receive its prerecorded calls to their cellular telephones the Court should treble the amount of statutory damages available to Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA.

COUNT II
Knowing and/or Willful Violation of the TCPA
(On Behalf of Plaintiffs and the Class)

60. Plaintiff re-allege and incorporates paragraphs 1-51 as if fully set forth herein.

61. At all times relevant, Defendant knew or should have known that its conduct as alleged herein violated the TCPA.

62. Defendant knew that it did not have prior express consent to transmit artificial or prerecorded voice calls, and knew or should have known that its conduct was a violation of the TCPA.

63. Because Defendant knew or should have known that Plaintiffs and Class Members had not given prior express consent to receive its prerecorded calls, the Court should treble the amount of statutory damages available to Plaintiffs and the other members of the putative Class pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA.

64. As a result of Defendant's violations, Plaintiffs and the Class Members are entitled to an award of \$1,500.00 in statutory damages, for each and every violation, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B) and 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Kivon Scott on behalf of himself and the other members of the Class, pray for the following relief:

- a. A declaration that Defendant's practices described herein violate the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. § 227;
- b. An injunction prohibiting Defendant from using an artificial or prerecorded voice to contact telephone numbers assigned to cellular telephones without the prior express permission of the called party;
- c. An award of actual and statutory damages; and
- d. Such further and other relief the Court deems reasonable and just.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff and Class Members hereby demand a trial by jury.

DOCUMENT PRESERVATION DEMAND

Plaintiff demands that Defendant take affirmative steps to preserve all records, lists, electronic databases or other itemizations associated with the allegations herein, including all records, lists, electronic databases or other itemizations in the possession of any vendors, individuals, and/or companies contracted, hired, or directed by Defendant to assist in sending the alleged communications.

Dated: June 01, 2023

Respectfully Submitted,

Shamis & Gentile, P.A.

/s/ Andrew J. Shamis

Andrew J. Shamis, Esq.

Georgia Bar No. 494196

ashamis@shamisgentile.com

/s/ Garrett O. Berg

Garrett O. Berg, Esq. (pro hac vice forthcoming)

Florida Bar No. 1000427

gberg@shamisgentile.com

14 NE 1st Avenue, Suite 705

Miami, FL 33132
Telephone: 305-479-2299

Counsel for Plaintiff and the Class